BRITISH COLUMBIA

Education Report

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DISTRICTS SHARE SECRETS OF SUCCESS

Regional forums showcase how the Province's $10 million literacy innovation grants are helping school districts improve students' reading and writing skills. Maple Ridge hosted a forum on May 8, Okanagan Skaha on May 10, Qualicum on May 12, and Prince Rupert on May 19. Prince George will host on June 5, Surrey on June 7, and Rocky Mountain on June 14. ***Read more.***

At right: Bond at the first of seven literacy forums to be held around B.C., Maple Ridge, May 8. A literacy coordinator from the Abbotsford school district looks on.

HOT TOPIC

It's no secret that B.C.'s population is shifting. We have 30,000 fewer students than five years ago – and expect to have another 30,000 fewer students over the next five years.

That means there is no general shortage of teachers – and we don't anticipate that changing.

We currently have about 1,200 teacher retirements a year. However, B.C. universities graduate more than 1,900 new teachers, and another 500 teachers move to B.C. each year. Those numbers add up to an adequate supply of teachers.

Nevertheless, like other provinces, B.C. has a hard time recruiting and retaining teachers for specialty subjects like math and physics, some areas of special education, and languages, especially French Immersion. Some rural and remote areas also have difficulty recruiting teachers.

The other exception is teachers on call. Government increased funding by $150-million this year, and then added $20 million for class size and composition. As a result, districts hired nearly 1,200 teachers: most had been on-call. However, districts are already moving to replenish their on-call lists.

One concern I've heard lately is that more B.C. teachers are moving to Alberta. That's just not true. Over the last three years, 427 Alberta teachers moved to B.C. compared to 316 B.C. teachers who moved to Alberta. In fact, more Alberta teachers moved to B.C. in each of the last three years.

The number of teachers in B.C. is monitored through the Teacher Supply and Demand Consortium. I can assure you that we will continue to closely monitor the supply of teachers to ensure there are teachers to meet the needs of all of B.C.'s students.

Things Are Looking Up, Jack
Written by Dan Bar-el

Reading Corner

People are falling throughout the kingdom. King Jack and his sister Princess Jill enlist the help of Bo Peep. Sound familiar? Bar-el, a Vancouver-based preschool teacher, parodies riddles, fairy tales and nursery rhymes. This comical jaunt through familiar stories is suitable for students in grades 3–5.

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Education

Through this year's Speech from the Throne, Premier Gordon Campbell and I made an unprecedented commitment to public education in British Columbia: between us, we will visit all 60 B.C. school districts. We want to see for ourselves how our education system is working. We want to hear directly from teachers, students, parents and support staff.

The Premier made several visits Friday May 12, touring the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows and Chilliwack school districts. He told me how impressed he was with the districts' efforts to improve students' reading and writing.

I am not surprised. I have visited over 10 districts now and am impressed by the energy, innovation, and dedication I have seen in students and staff alike. On Monday May 15, I visited Saanich where students in a Grade 7 class at Bayside Middle school enthusiastically showed me how they built their own websites. Students were reading and writing, and improving their computer literacy, while having fun.

It's because of programs like that multimedia class at Bayside Middle school that the province did so well on the first-ever Canadian Composite Learning Index.

The index, released last week, shows that British Columbia is second only to Alberta in Canada when it comes to learning. That's great news, and a testament to the wonderful work going on in our schools every day. We are well on our way to becoming the best-educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent.

I look forward to meeting more of you during my upcoming school district visits.

Read more about the Canadian Composite Learning Index.